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NEWS LETTER

A Research Center for Turf and Field Sports,
their History and Social Significance

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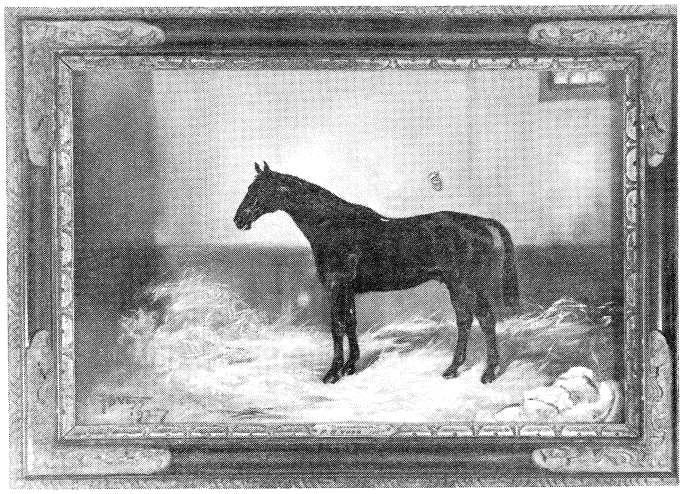
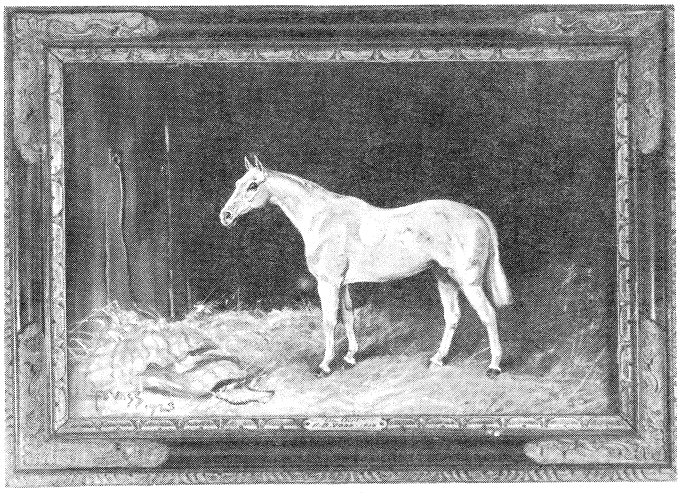


SANDOWN by F. B. Voss 1927



OH GIRL by F. B. Voss 1928

The Langley Hunters

Eleanor Langley Fletcher, a major supporter of the National Sporting Library and a long time member of its Board of Directors, was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Langley of Atoka Farm, near Middleburg, Virginia. The Langleys hunted in England and Ireland and were pillars of the Orange County Hunt, so that Eleanor was virtually brought up in the saddle, riding to hounds with many packs on both sides of the Atlantic and competing in Virginia and Long Island horse shows. After a 1948 hunting tour of Ireland she wrote and published *Hoofmarks on Eire*. With her husband, Walter Fletcher, a member of the Jockey Club, she bred hunters and racehorses at their November Hill Farm, near Charlottesville, Va. Mrs. Fletcher's many gifts to the Library include the Edwin Cooper (c. 1780-1835) painting, "Groom With Hunter"; the 1828 edition of Nimrod's *Sporting*; the 1743 edition of *A General System of Horsemanship* by the Duke of Newcastle; Pierce Egan's 1825 *Sporting Anecdotes*; Radcliffe's *The Noble Science,* 1839, and seven volumes of the Derrydale Press, Hitchcock edition of Sommerville and Ross foxhunting tales, along with four volumes of Surtees, to mention only a few of her donations through the years.

In her will Mrs. Fletcher left to the Library portraits of two of her favorite hunters, Oh Girl and Sandown. These were painted in 1927 and 1928 by Franklyn Brooke Voss of Monkton, Maryland, then America's leading equestrian portrait painter. Several years ago Mrs. Fletcher had also given the Library the Voss portrait of her mother, Mrs. William Langley, in hunting clothes, riding sidesaddle.

Frank Voss grew up on Long Island where his father was a founder of the Rockaway Hunt Club and of the Rockaway Steeplechase Association. The artist was an accomplished horseman, who foxhunted, played polo and rode steeplechasers. He later moved to Monkton where his brother, Edward Voss, was for many years Master of the Elkridge-Harford Hunt.

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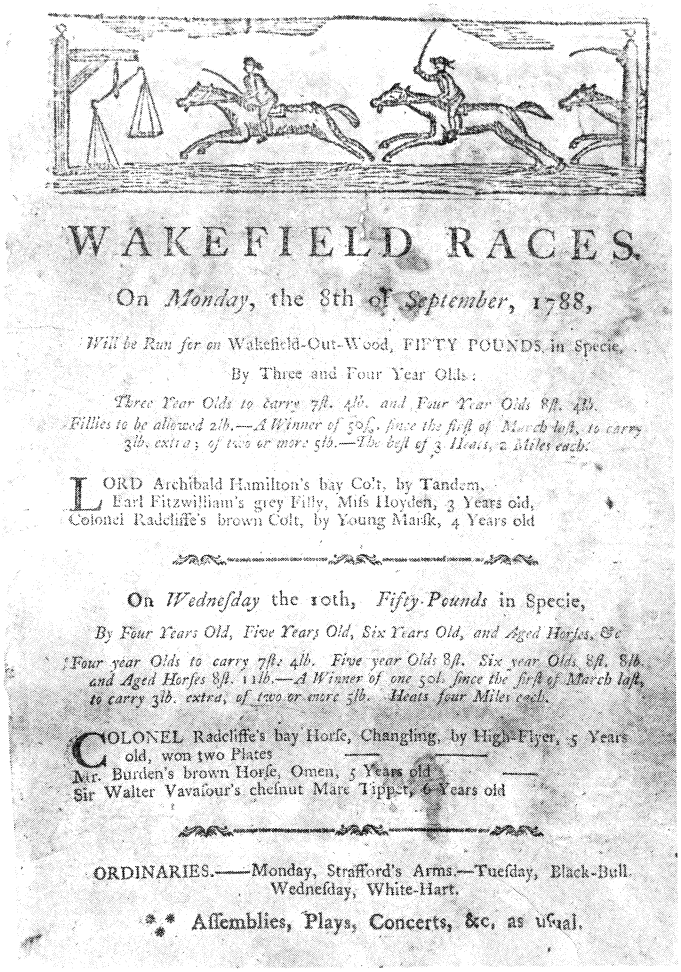


WAKEFIELD RACES.

On *Monday*, the 8th of *September*, 1788,

Will be Run for on Wakefield-Out-Wood, FIFTY POUNDS in Specie,

By Three and Four Year Olds:

Three Year Olds to carry 7st. 4lb. and Four Year Olds 8st. 4lb. Fillies to be allowed 2lb.—A Winner of 50£, since the first of March last, to carry 3lb. extra; of two or more 5lb.—The best of 3 Heats, 2 Miles each.

LORD Archibald Hamilton's bay Colt, by Tandem,
Earl Fitzwilliam's grey Filly, Miſs Hoyden, 3 Years old,
Colonel Radcliffe's brown Colt, by Young Marſk, 4 Years old

On *Wedneſday* the 10th, *Fifty Pounds* in Specie,

By Four Years Old, Five Years Old, Six Years Old, and Aged Horſes, &c

Four year Olds to carry 7st. 4lb. Five year Olds 8st. Six year Olds 8st. 8lb. and Aged Horſes 8st. 11lb.—A Winner of one 50£ ſince the firſt of March laſt, to carry 3lb. extra, of two or more 5lb. Heats four Miles each.

COLONEL Radcliffe's bay Horſe, Changling, by High-Flyer, 5 Years old, won two Plates
Mr. Burden's brown Horſe, Omen, 5 Years old
Sir Walter Vavaſour's cheſnut Mare Tippet, 6 Years old

ORDINARIES.——Monday, Strafford's Arms.—Tueſday, Black-Bull. Wedneſday, White-Hart.

*** Aſſemblies, Plays, Concerts, &c, as uſual.

Broadside given by Edward Johnson to NSL.

The Wakefield Races

Judith Ozment

To many historians ephemera is even more interesting than books or formal documents. Ephemera, raw, unedited history of the purist kind, generates great interest from anyone seeking to approach the time, place and people of another era.

The NSL is most fortunate to have received from Mr. Edward Johnson a 7''x10'' broadside announcing the ''Wakefield Races to be run on Monday, the 8th of September, 1788, will be run for on Wakefield Outwood, fifty pounds in specie, by Three and Four Year Olds; Three Year Olds to carry 7 st. 4 lb. and Four Year Olds 8 st. 4 lb. Fillies to be allowed 2 lb. A winner of 50£ since the first of March last, to carry 3 lb. extra; of two or more 5 lb. The best of 3 Heats, 2 Miles each.''

In J. Fairfax-Blakeborough's *Northern Turf History Vol. II, Extinct Race Meetings* (NSL Collection) the Wakefield Outwood Course, the meeting day, and the life and times of the people are vividly depicted. The races were first held in August 1678 and ''became a favourite sport at Wakefield late in the century, the course being marked out on the Outwood Moor. The meeting was held in the middle of August. The chief race was for a plate valued at 25 pounds silver, and a great concourse of people used to assemble from all parts. On August 20, 1679, a foot race was held as well as a horse race, the same man winning both, causing dispute about the result with charges of confusion and trickery over the matter. In 1682 the meeting had grown into a fair lasting three days, and was attended by the Duke of Norfolk and many Lords and Knights, as well as by large crowds of people. The races were still held at the same location and time up to the middle of the 18th century, when an enclosure of

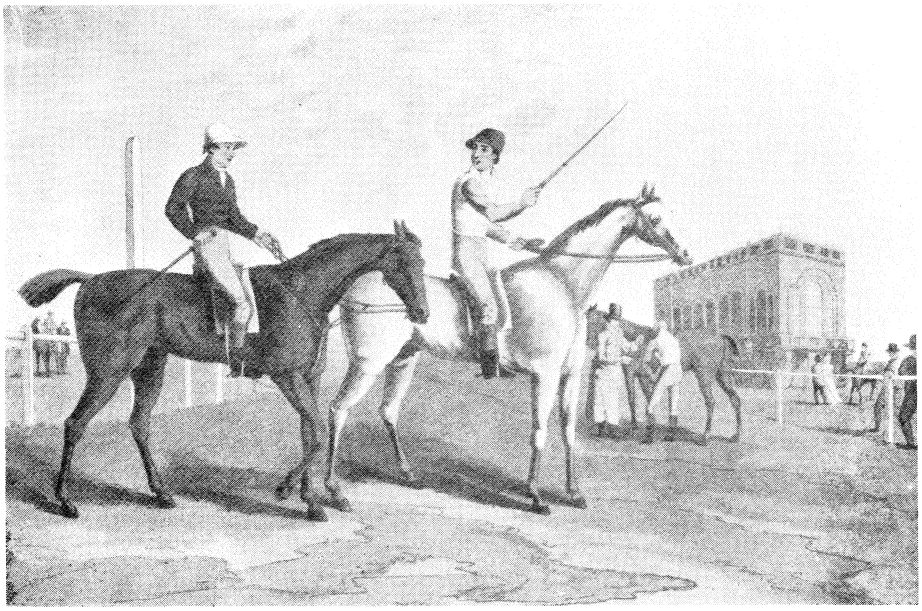
(Continued on Page 3)

Fletcher (cont.)

Voss painted many of the famous race horses of his day, Assault, Stymie, Exterminator, Whirlaway, Seabiscuit, Equipoise, Top Flight, Discovery and so forth. Several of these portraits were reproduced in *Racing in America 1922-1936*, written by John Hervey and published by the Jockey Club. He was equally accomplished in the field of fox-hunting, painting many Masters surrounded by packs of hounds, as well as individual horses and riders. One of his masterpieces, painted for Joseph B. Thomas, M.F.H., and reproduced in color as the frontis-piece to the latter's great book *Hounds and Hunting Through the Ages*, shows the Piedmont hounds racing across the broad pasture fields north of Upperville, Va. Frank Voss died of a heart attack as he would have wished, leading the first flight in the course of a great run with his brother's hounds.

Eleanor Langley hunted Oh Girl and Sandown with the Meadow Brook Hounds on Long Island, and with the Virginia and Maryland packs, particularly with the Orange County Hunt, The Plains, Va. She also competed with them in horse shows, particularly the Piping Rock Show on Long Island near where her parents lived when not in Virginia. The *Official Horse Show Blue Book* lists the results of the Piping Rock Show in 1927 and in 1928. Oh Girl was 1st in Light Weight Hunters, 4th Jumpers; Sandown 3rd Light Weight Hunters in 1927. In 1928 Oh Girl placed 1st in Hunters Ladies to Ride and won the F. P. Garvan Cup in the Corinthian. Sandown was 2nd in Hunters Ladies to Ride, Reserve Champion Light Weight Hunter and 4th in the Corinthian.

The portraits of these favorite hunters, which were owned and ridden by a lifetime devotee of the sport, and whose likenesses were painted by an equally devoted sportsman, are a valued addition to the National Sporting Library's collection.



The Grandstand on Outwood Course, Wakefield, 1750.

the commons of Outwood took place.''

A 1742 account of the race at the new Wakefield Outwood course is described as being located on what was formerly known as Lawns (a clearing in a wood), about 2 miles in length, bounded on the north by the Lawns Lane, the east reaching to the Lofthouse Beck, while to the west extending nearly to the Wakefield and Bradford turnpike road. On the highest point of the course a grandstand was erected, the top or outside gallery of which was covered with lead. One night quite a sensation was caused in the locality when the whole of the lead was stripped off and carried away by burglars. A long range of stabling was also built and at race times booths and tents were set up nearby.

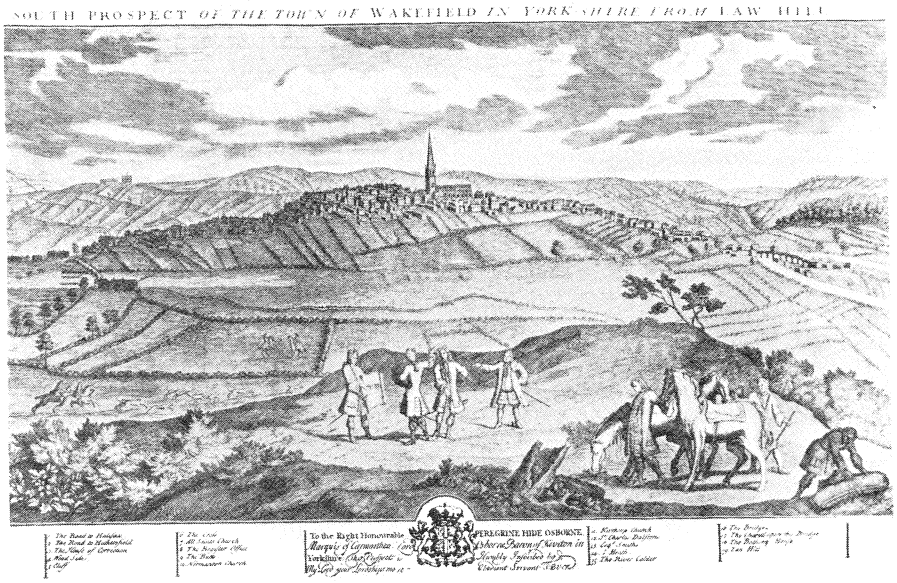
The races brought great numbers of people to the town for the race week each year, and the bustle and stir that took place in and about the Black Swan on Silver Street, an old hostelry, as the horses passed through the narrow yard to be entered in the races, can be easily imagined. From near and far would come the ''quality'' in their coaches and four to join the townspeople in the week's festivities.

The week was filled with entertainment of all sorts. *The York Courant* of 1748 announced ''Our readers are desired to take notice of the advertisement of the Wakefield Races, as published in our last, and to regard that there will be Cockings at the Black Swan Pit on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of Race Week.'' On September 7, 1776 the actor, Tate Wilkinson, opened the new theatre by ''performing in the new theatre of that pleasant town and neighborhood.'' The play was the Beggar's Opera, greatly attended by those in town for the races and seeking an evening of entertainment. For years the theatre was opened regularly for the race meeting; in 1782 Mrs. Jordan played in the ''Country Girl'' and received £1 11s 6d. for the week. The great actress, Mrs. Siddons, appeared in this theatre in 1786 as Belvidera in ''Venice Preserved'', and John Philip Kemble played the Shakespearan roles Othello, Richard III and Hamlet in 1788.

On the first and third nights of the races, beginning in 1727, assemblies were held at the White Hart, the principal inn, which stood at the top of White Hart Yard, between that yard and Southgate. On the intervening night a concert was given in the great Assembly Rooms on the opposite side of the yard at which some leading star usually appeared. It was the fashion to elect a lady as Queen of the Assembly to reign over the week's festivities.

From *Weatherby's Racing Calendar* (NSL Collection) we find that the race held on Monday, September 8, 1788 was won by Lord Hamilton's bay colt by Tandem, over Lord Fitzwilliam's grey filly Miss Hoyden. The race held on Wednesday, September 10th was won by Sir W. Vavasour's chestnut mare Tippet beating Mr. Burdon's brown horse Omen and Col. Radcliffe's bay horse Changeling in two heats out of three.

The last race was held in 1794. The previous year an Act was passed allotting the 2,500 acres of the course, which had been considered public land, to private owners and in 1805 ''no portion of the course remains unappropriated, all being under cultivation as is the ground of the Outwood everywhere.'' The Wakefield Races exist now only on fragments of paper and in the history of the sport.



The Town of Wakefield in Yorkshire from Law Hill, showing Ings Racecourse, 1722.

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